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Missionary
John O. Dyrnes, M. D.
1867--1943

By
ANDREAS HELLAND

Lutheran Board of Missions
Minneapolis, Minnesota
1944

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Pastor

John O. Dyrnes, M. D.

1867--1943

Medical Missionary in Madagascar
for forty-three years

MISSIONARY RESEARCH
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By
ANDREAS HELLAND

"And we shall see God"

Second Edition

Lutheran Board of Missions
Minneapolis, Minnesota
1944

PREFACE

It is sincerely hoped that a biography of Dr. John O. Dyrnes may be written in a not too distant future. But this cannot be done in a matter of weeks or months. One reason for this is that much of the material, as for instance his extensive diaries, is in Madagascar, and how soon this material will be available it is difficult to say under the present circumstances.

For this and other reasons Lutheran Board of Missions has found it advisable to publish a brief memorial pamphlet. This pamphlet is of course not meant to take the place of a biography. Rather, it is hoped that it may help to increase in the hearts of the friends of missions a greater desire for such a biography. Dr. Dyrnes was a Christian who loved all of the Lord's work. He had a wide, inclusive spiritual outlook and was deeply grateful for every effort made to spread the Gospel of Christ.

Dr. Dyrnes' long and faithful service was made heavy during the last years of his life on account of bereavement and physical illness, but everything possible was done by his co-workers to share his burden. To all who thus faithfully rendered their service, Lutheran Board of Missions desires to express its deeply felt gratitude. It was done for the sake of Christ and for the glory of His name. He will not forget.

I wish also to express my personal gratitude to all who in one way or another have aided me with information and advice and thus made possible the appearance of this memorial pamphlet.

Andreas Helland.

JOHN O. DYRNES

Childhood and Early Youth

On Sunday, May 5, 1867, there was born on a little farmstead on the island of Smølen in north-western Norway a child who looked so weak that the midwife found it advisable to have him baptized immediately. He was given the name Johannes and was the third child of Ole Arntzen Dyrnes and his wife Anne Martha, nee Johnson. He had an older brother, Anton, and a sister, Beret. Later another brother was born whose name was Peter. Although John's life at first was despaired of he grew to be a normal child, perhaps his only serious handicap being that he was quite near-sighted. In time this was overcome by the use of glasses.

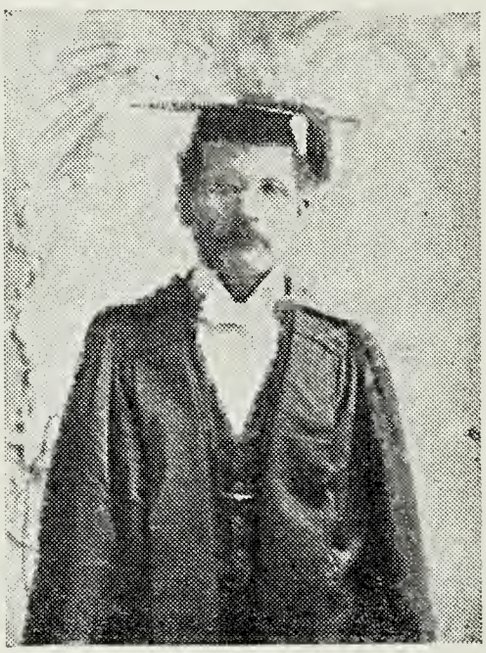
John's parents lived on a small, rented farm, but for them as for most of their neighbors, fishing was the chief means of livelihood. Their economic circumstances were not easy, and the fact that the father died early made the situation even more difficult.

As a boy John was not especially interested in physical labor. Least of all did the hazardous work of a fisherman appeal to him. As an obedient child in a family where the circumstances were such that everyone had to do his or her share, he would do what he was asked to do, but his heart was not in it. As soon as the task was done he would usually disappear, only to be found behind a big boulder or in some other secluded place, reading a book. It was evident that he hungered for knowledge. His childhood educational training was no doubt very limited. There was no school house on the island, at least not in his school district. The instruction was carried on in the small homes

where sessions were held a few days at each place. It is likely, however, that he received a good religious instruction.

When John's father died of brain fever in 1873, at the early age of forty-three, the oldest son, Anton, was about twelve, and the youngest, Peter, about three. As was the case in thousands of families in Norway in those days, the best solution that presented itself was that some grown-up

At time of graduation from Augsburg Seminary, 1895



At time of graduation from Medical School, 1898

member should emigrate to America in order to help to support the family in the homeland. But in this home which had been bereft of father and breadwinner, there was as yet no one old enough to go. So the widow and children toiled on as best they could, until Anton became of age and emigrated in 1882. He came to Ashland, Wisconsin, where he started to work in a planing mill. In the same city he became one of the founders of the Nidaros Lutheran congregation.

In 1883 John, then not much over sixteen years of age,

joined him in Ashland. His first job was in the planing mill where Anton was working, but the economic conditions in the Northwest were not of the best at that time, and after a short while the mill shut down. He now tried a little of everything, working in the woods in the winter, driving a grocery wagon, etc. The work did not appeal to him, not because he felt himself above being engaged in physical labor, but because he yearned for knowledge. And there did not seem to be any way open for him to satisfy this yearning in Ashland at the time. That which concerned him most of all was how he should be able to acquire a fairly good knowledge of the English language.

About this time there came to Ashland an ambitious Scotchman by the name of O'Neal who bought a hotel which he aimed to make into a first class hostelry. To him John hired out as a choreboy at a monthly wage of $15.00. This really came to form a turning point in his life, and that in a rather unexpected way.

As stated above, O'Neal was a very ambitious person in his way, and John Dyrnes in his. The one aimed at building up a hotel business, the other at acquiring a good knowledge of the English language, but only as a step toward greater things.

In order to build up a good reputation for his hotel Mr. O'Neal secured a well-recommended Negro woman from St. Paul as chef. When she became acquainted with the light-complexioned, curly-haired young man and found out about his yearnings, she advised him to go to St. Paul where the opportunities for schooling would be very much better than in Ashland. She recommended him to a railroad executive, a Mr. Lambert, with whom he found work as stableboy and general helper around the house. It was the intention that he was to attend public school, but on account of the nature of his work, this was somewhat difficult. And besides, having this grown-up "newcomer" to-

gether with the children in the lower grades presented certain difficult problems of discipline, so the plan had to be given up.

SCHOOL DAYS

While John Dyrnes' plans had to be altered, he could not give up the hope of acquiring an education. His attention was called to a small school that has become known under different names, as Baldwin Seminary, Baldwin Academy, and St. Paul Academy. It was a private school affiliated with the Presbyterian church and became in time the well-known Macalester College. At that time it was run by the Reverend Edward D. Neil, an indefatigable promoter of higher Christian education. Dyrnes attended this academy for two years, working in spare time as janitor of the school.

In the fall of 1889 Dyrnes entered Augsburg Seminary. He received his B. A. degree in the spring of 1892. Even before he came to Augsburg his life had received a definitely Christian direction, and the years in the College had helped him to become clear as to his calling, that of becoming a foreign missionary. With this goal in veiw he entered the Theological Department of Augsburg in the fall of 1892, and was graduated in the spring of 1895.

It might appear as though Dyrnes by this time had given up the thought of becoming a foreign missionary, or even a pastor here at home, because already while studying theology he had taken up the study of medicine at the Minneapolis College of Physicians and Surgeons, at that time connected with Hamline University. For him, however, this was only a step in the direction of missionary service. It may be that he had in mind the example of David Livingstone; it may also be that he had in mind that same ideal which was also the one that fired the soul

of Livingstone, that of "The Great Physician, the Sympathizing Jesus."

In 1898 Dyrnes received his M.D. degree, but there did not at that time seem to be an opportunity to enter foreign mission service. He therefore took up the practice of Medicine at Hanley Falls and later at Morris, Minnesota, where he remained until the end of the year. He had then received a call from the foreign mission board of the Lutheran Free Church to be a medical missionary in Madagascar, and as soon as he had made the necessary arrangements in regard to his medical practice, he left for Paris in the latter part of February, 1899. Here he studied French and also continued his study of medicine in order to receive his medical degree from the University of Paris, which was required in order to be able to practice medicine in the French colony of Madagascar.

Before leaving Paris, Dr. Dyrnes was ordained to the Christian ministry. The ordination took place May 6, 1900, in one of the larger Lutheran churches in Paris. The superintendent (bishop) of the Lutheran Church of France, the Reverend Pastor Kuhn, performed the ordination assisted by Reverend Büchsenschütz and four missionaries, one from the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America and three from the Norwegian Mission Society of Norway.

In the vita which was read on this occasion, Dr. Dyrnes stated: "As far back as I can remember, it has been my sincere desire to live in fellowship with my Lord and Savior, but I cannot say that my spiritual life has had an even growth. There have been many conflicts; there have been times of doubt, coldness, and darkness; times when I was not sure whether or not I dared to count myself among those whose names are written in the Book of Life. But then there have also been times of light and of a renewed assurance that I had not been snatched out of the hand

of the Lord.—As it is the greatest aim of all of God's children to glorify the name and to fulfill the will of Him Who called us out of darkness and into His marvelleous light, so have I also experienced this yearning to have a part in the work in the Kingdom of God on earth. I have felt it as my special calling to work among the heathen. With this end in view I have also accepted a call from the Foreign Mission Board of the Lutheran Free Church, and have been sent by it. There is yet many a difficulty to overcome, but the Lord Who has begun His work, will also perfect it. I can only say: Lord, here am I; send me."

These words were written in 1900; in 1939 Dr. Dyrnes wrote to a close friend: "The call to become a missionary came to me when I was young. I believed then, and I have always believed since, that it came from the Lord. With that belief I came to the mission field, and with that belief have I been here till now. I have never had any call to leave the mission field. At times a sort of a desire to leave this place has come upon me; but every time the desire to stay has taken a stronger hold on me."

ON THE MISSION FIELD

Dr. Dyrnes arrived at Manasoa, Madagascar, to begin his labors as a medical missionary on September 1, 1900. Here a sight met his eyes which made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind. On the one hand he saw a little cluster of small buildings, not much bigger or better than the straw-huts of the natives, and hardly more sanitary. They were the station house, church, girls' home, etc. On the other hand he saw a little cemetery containing the graves of four missionaries, Sisters Pernille Pedersen and Caroline Olson, Mrs. J. B. Høygaard, and Mr. N. A. Hatlem who had been head of the small beginning of an educational mission. How many of these lives might have been

saved if there had been a medical missionary to restore the health of the sufferers, or at least to ease their pains? Nor could it be denied that some of these lives might have been spared if there had been better houses and a better knowledge of how to take care of one's health in that fever-infested climate.

Dr. Dyrnes saw immediately that part of his work must be that of providing better houses and of creating better health conditions for the missionaries. Looking at the situa-

The medical missionary on his faithful mule

tion realistically, he pleaded that after all the missionaries were there to live and to work, not to die and receive praise for their heroic sacrifice. It was a hard struggle, and the abnormal death-rate was not eliminated by a single stroke. However, in a few years it was greatly reduced.

Nor was Dr. Dyrnes himself to be spared for the trials of pioneer missionary life. He, too, had to have his baptism of fire, in a very literal sense. In August, 1901, he had his first attack of the dreaded and deadly blackwater fever. But by the grace of God he recovered, only soon afterwards to have the experience of having his house burned

to the ground, with his books, medical instruments and supplies, and all. It really meant that he had to make a new start. However, this calamity proved to be a blessing in disguise. It demonstrated in a most forceful way the necessity of more substantial and less inflamable houses, and created a new sense of responsibility here at home both for the work and for the workers.

Dr. Dyrnes worked at Manasoa for over forty-three years, visiting America only twice in the interval. He had his first furlough in 1910-11. On this trip he attended the great ecumenical mission conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, and also visited his childhood home in Norway. But most of his furlough was spent in France where he studied tropical medicine at the University of Paris, receiving a diploma at the end of the course. His visit to America was cut short by the death of Missionary Jakob B. Jerstad who passed away at Manasoa May 27, 1911 while superintending the mission in the absence of Dr. Dyrnes in the homeland. The death was caused by dysentery.

Dr. Dyrnes' next visit to America was in 1919-20, and a part of this furlough he spent at the medical school of Tulane University, New Orleans, La., where he continued his studies of tropical medicine. While on this visit he was present at the fiftieth anniversary of Augsburg Seminary and conveyed the greetings of our mission churches in Madagascar to the institution. After that he did not visit America again.

On June 7, 1906, Dr. Dyrnes was married to Miss Sarah Johnson of Lowry, Minnesota. The marriage took place in Tulear, Madagascar, immediately after her arrival. Mrs. Dyrnes was an exceedingly able and devoted helpmeet to her husband, and was also a missionary in her own right. Her work among the women and children at Manasoa and in the surrounding district has meant much for the establishment of Christian homes on our mission field. Together

with her husband she superintended the large Boys' Home at Manasoa. She visited America three times, the last visit was in 1931-1933.

PERSONAL GLIMPSES

From what is known about Dr. Dyrnes, the most outstanding trait of his character was the intense thirst for knowledge, which remained with him throughout his whole life. Whether he as a child settled down behind a boulder in his native, stormswept island home in Norway, or he entered the unpretentious quarters of mid-western academies, colleges and theological seminaries, or the stately halls of American and European universities, he was always seeking knowledge. And it was indeed more than significant that it was a lowly colored woman who was the instrument in God's hand first to direct him on the way to the satisfaction of this thirst for knowledge. In the unsearchable wisdom and grace of God he was destined to devote a long and eminently useful life to the physical, moral and spiritual regeneration of the colored people of far-off Madagascar. Such are the ways of the Lord, and they are wonderful in our eyes. He continued to be a student to his dying day, not for the mere satisfaction of gaining knowledge, but for enabling himself to be of ever greater help and blessing to his fellow-men.

As Dr. Dyrnes grew into young manhood, two other outstanding traits seem to have been his resourcefulness and willingness to serve. The following incidents may serve as illustrations.

While a student at Augsburg, Dyrnes became a member of Trinity congregation in Minneapolis. He not only proved himself a very regular attendant at the services, but he also had a desire to draw others to the place of worship. He was especially concerned about the many

young men who lived in rooming houses in that part of the city. He therefore went to his pastor and asked him that he might have some printed cards, inviting people to come to church. With these cards in his pockets he would go up and down Cedar and Washington Avenues, enter roominghouses, restaurants, and even saloons, distributing the cards and also extending oral invitations whenever opportunity presented itself. He was not always met with gratitude and blessings. Still there were those who not only accepted the invitation politely, but who also followed it.

Dr. and Mrs. J. O. Dyrnes

Upon hearing that Dr. Dyrnes had passed away, one lady described this incident to the writer: She and another young girl came from Iowa to Minneapolis to find housework. On Sunday evenings they would attend services in Trinity Church. There they soon noticed a friendly looking young man, curly-haired and bespectacled, who was always asking people to come again. One Sunday evening he spoke to them also, inviting them to come to a young people's meeting that was to be held one evening the following week at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Halvor Bredesen. The girls said that they would like to come, but they did not know if they could find the place. "Oh, that is all right," said young Dyrnes, "I will go there early and hang

up a lantern on the porch." Porch lights were not common in those days. The answer was symbolic of his whole life: He was ever ready to lift up a lantern in order to shed light upon the paths of other people.

Dr. Dyrnes needed to be resourceful. His medical and surgical equipment, or rather the lack of it, was such as would no doubt have caused despair in many a doctor's heart. And then he lost his entire set of instruments in the fire at Manasoa, only a year after he had taken up his work there. It is true that afterwards a number of instruments were generously donated by his life-long friend, Dr. Peter M. Holl, and members of the medical and surgical staff of the Lutheran Deaconess Hospital in Minneapolis. But even so the equipment was quite incomplete and antiquated. However, the resourceful medical missionary had a way of getting along. — The writer of these pages was once with him when he paid a visit to a young physician who was just ready to leave for the mission field. The younger man did not mean to complain, but he almost begged pardon when he showed the older colleague his none too complete surgical equipment. Dr. Dyrnes was enthusiastic and declared it quite satisfactory, and he even pointed to this or that instrument which he himself had never possessed, and in a humorous way he went on to tell how he had managed to improvise instruments of a very crude character. "But then," he added with a twinkle in his eye, "we are not quite civilized in Madagascar yet."

Dr. Dyrnes' humor was genuine and contagious. He had a way of seeing and pointing out to others the bright side of any situation. When the temperature arose to over a hundred and ten degrees he would discourse humorously on the blessing of not having to buy coal or having to spend money on storm windows. — One evening in 1911 he and the writer were sitting in the mission office until a very late hour. We had discussed important matters pertaining

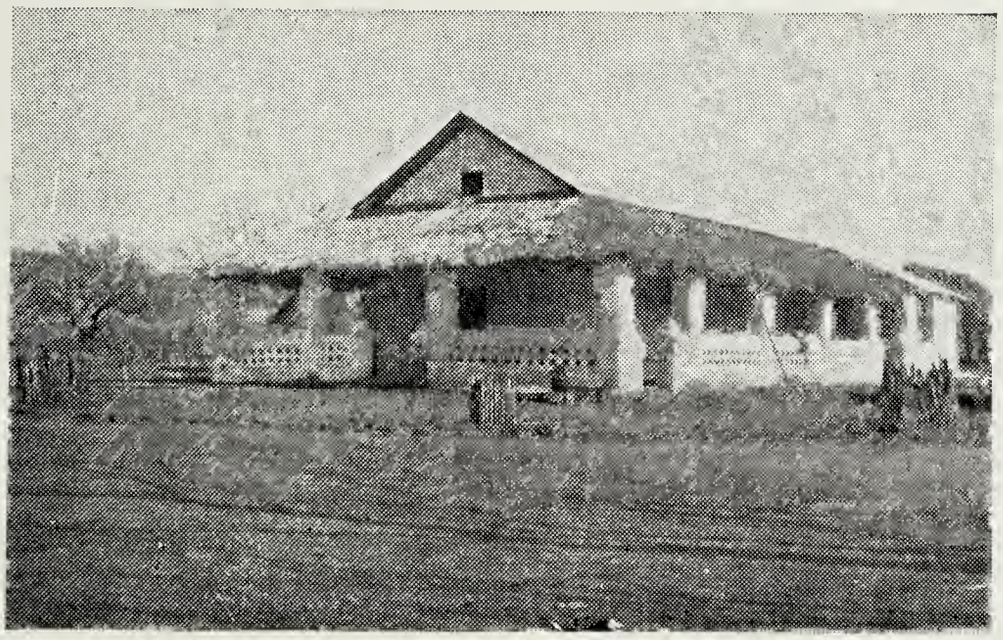
to the mission work, and there had been lighter intervals when he had related incidents from his missionary life and especially from his medical practice. Even the saddest cases seemed to have a bright side to them when seen through his eyes. Finally I asked a question something like this: "Can you always see a humorous side to your work which at times certainly must be very depressing?" His answer came slowly and with an expression of sadness over his face as he replied: "No, it is painfully sad to see a heathen die."

During one of these talks which sometimes would last until late at night, Dr. Dyrnes once volunteered the rather startling information: "Foreign missionaries may be classified as belonging to one of two general groups, angels and bulldogs. I belong to the latter group." The remark was not made in answer to any question, either personal or general. It was entirely spontaneous, and how much truth there was in it as a characterization of himself may safely be left unsettled. That it was liberally mixed with humor is without any doubt.

Dr. Dyrnes gave the impression of being no stickler on rules, and at times he may have been irked by them. There are of course two sides to this question. Rules are both beneficial and necessary in all work, not least so where several persons are to work together. But it is important that they be practiced in a liberal, understanding spirit. A case in point will best illustrate this. In the original rules of Lutheran Board of Missions governing the work of the missionaries it was stated that whenever natives were able and willing to pay for medical service, such payment should accrue to the mission treasury on the field. These rules had been modeled after similar rules adopted by Lutheran mission societies in Europe, and the one just mentioned seems to be good and wise—at least on paper. It was no doubt in order to guard against any temptation that the

medical missionary might ever feel to put such fees into his own pocket at the same time as he was receiving a fixed salary from the mission.

Dr. Dyrnes had not a little good-humored fun at the expense of this rule. "I could of course follow this rule," he said, "if we only had a large enough box for our mission treasury. For then I could put into it every rooster, every little bunch of bananas, or every bowlful of rice which I might receive for medical services." "Well, what do you do, then?" he was asked. The answer came back quickly



The Clinic

and readily: "I have my cook make a good meal for the sick, or for the poor whom we always have with us. And should it ever happen that we have more roosters than we have persons in need of a good meal, I have never had any conscientious scruples in enjoying a good meal myself from part of my 'fees'." Such was the "rugged individualism" of the man who characterized himself as a bulldog.

It has been reported that Dr. Dyrnes many a night would not go home and to bed, but would stay at his clinic working or studying until the early hours of the morning.

Then he would throw himself down on a cot and try to catch a short nap before new throngs of ailing humans would come for help.

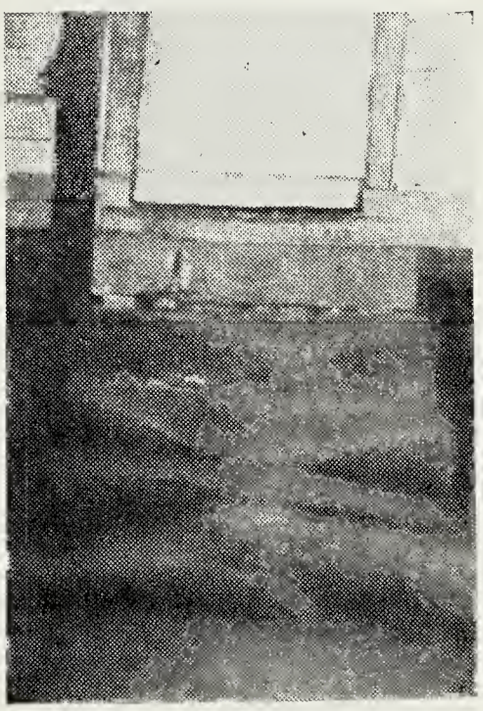
Again there comes to mind one of those conversations of bygone years when this question was put to Dr. Dyrnes: "Now suppose that you should some day be faced with the alternative to have to give up either medical or evangelistic mission work, what then?" Without a moment's hesitation the answer came: "I would choose to continue in the evangelistic mission work; for after all, it is the Gospel of Christ and nothing else that can effect the healing of the nations."

This leads us to that phase of Dr. Dyrnes' life which was the mainspring in all his endeavors — his simple faith in God and the saving power of His Gospel, and his deep yearning to share this Gospel with others. Like that greatest of foreign missionaries, the Apostle Paul, he could say honestly and gratefully: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." To Dyrnes this was his life's greatest and most blessed conviction.

In this connection there comes to mind an experience that Dr. Dyrnes in a quiet evening hour related in his own simple way. It was in the year 1907. He had taken a trip to the interior of Madagascar, and while there he suffered one of his attacks of blackwater fever.—All in all he is reported to have had seven such attacks, which in so many cases prove fatal even the first or second time. — He had good medical care, but nothing seemed to avail. He had lost the power of speech, but not of sight or hearing, and his mind was clear. He noticed that the two doctors that were in the sick-room were conferring in a low voice. Only this much he gathered, that they were agreed that the end would come very soon. As he lay there, unable to move or speak, he repeated to himself over and over again the

words of the Psalmist: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." A profound sense of happiness and security came over him. He was entirely satisfied, for one of two things would surely happen: either he would live, and then he should continue the work that he had loved so well; or else he would die, and that would be so very much better, for then he would be with the Lord. Living or dying, he would be in the hands of the Good Shepherd, and he should not want. To hear him tell about this in the simplest, most natural way was to get a glimpse into a soul whose childlike faith shone out of his radiant eyes.

This can hardly be explained in any other way than that Dr. Dyrnes lived his life near to God and near to e t e r n i t y. Many of his letters both to near relatives and others bear testimony to the fact that to him witnessing about Christ and admonishing others to seek the Lord and to continue to live in His fellowship was a burden that he felt was laid upon him. But it was a burden that he bore willingly and joyfully.—And practical and matter-of-fact though he was, he could sometimes permit one to look into a region of other-worldliness in his soul-life that was wonderful. Then one would sense that he was indeed treading on holy ground.



The worn Clinic steps
(See page 32)

TOWARDS LIFE'S EVENTIDE

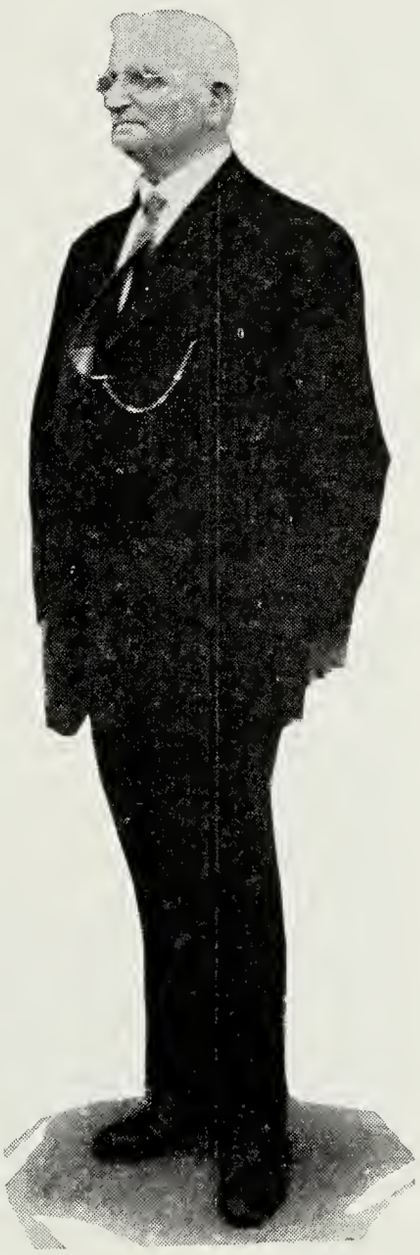
It was a chilly fall morning when Dr. Dyrnes reached Minneapolis on his furlough in 1919. He felt cold and uncomfortable, and one of his first questions was: "When do I go back home to Madagascar?" He went south for the winter, for the Minnesota climate was too cold for him.

While he was glad and thankful for the opportunity to be among old friends once more, one was left with a feeling that Madagascar had become a real home to him and that he would prefer, not only to live in that land, but also to die and be laid to rest there. Thus it was to some extent in deference to what seemed to be his deepest desire that the mission board did not request his return when he had reached the normal retirement age. There was also the consideration that even long before he died he had become the last and only Protestant medical missionary in all Madagascar. The board took the position that it would gladly see him come home for good, but it would not insist upon it. It should also be remembered that although age and a lingering disease forced him into a slower pace he was still filling his place both as a medical missionary and as superintendent of the large and important Manasoa station district.

When Dr. Dyrnes also in his last years at times touched upon the question of a visit to America, and possibly also to Norway, it was always mentioned more as a daydream than as a definite wish, and he seemed to think of it rather as a brief visit than as a final return from the mission field. It has now become known, however, that shortly before Mrs. Dyrnes' death they had really obtained passports. One is left with the impression that there had come over him a more or less conscious yearning, not uncommon in elderly people, once more to see the places of his childhood and youth. But at the bottom of it all there was still the

desire to be laid to rest in the place and among the people that in a very real sense had become his own.

Then suddenly came this message on November 20, 1937: "Sarah died this morning.—Dyrnes." She died of blood poisoning (septicaemia) after a brief illness. Dr. Dyrnes was absent on a tour of the district and was also to make a trip to Tulear. On account of this, word of his wife's illness was slow in reaching him, and when he came home she had lapsed into an unconsciousness from which she failed to rally. Sister Milla Pederson had done everything in human power to nurse her and to relieve her pains, watching at her bedside day and night. But the hour had come when the Lord was calling His servant home to rest.



The Doctor at sixty-five

It is difficult to realize fully what a terrible blow the death of Mrs. Dyrnes under such tragic circumstances must have been to the aging missionary. They had been married for thirty-one years and had faithfully shared the many joys and sorrows of the work for the Lord which was so dear to their hearts. In telling about his feelings during the days following his wife's death Dr. Dyrnes wrote to some of her relatives: "This has been a strange Sunday. I was in church this forenoon and also in the afternoon. Almost all the hymns were heaven-centric. I suppose the pastor had

chosen some of them for my sake. I tried also to rejoice with those up there, but the joy is not joy when it is to be swallowed with tears. . . . I have had many visitors. People do what they can to heal my wound. They sing, pray, speak, and read the Word of God. Some even bring a few pennies to show their sympathy. . . . It touches my heart; it is love. They come weeping, and I must comfort them instead of being comforted. Sarah has given me much with which to comfort others."

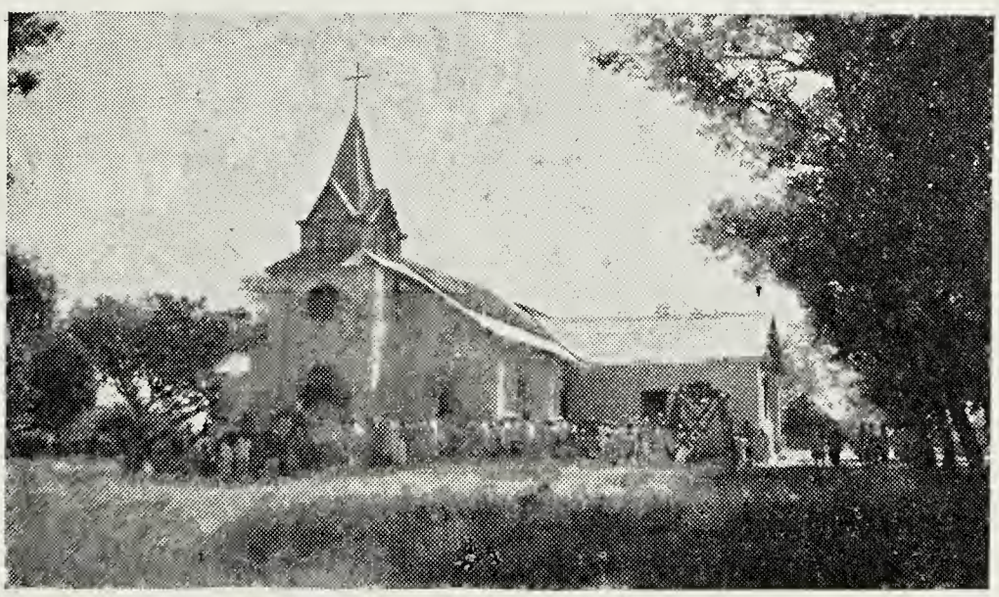
The pioneer missionary, then just past seventy years of age, had been left alone. But he continued faithfully at the post where God had placed him a generation ago. With an iron constitution, yet several times attacked by acute diseases, he was still carrying on. The death of his wife had made his decision to be laid to rest in Madagascar's soil still more definite, although he occasionally would still express a yearning to make a brief visit home once more. But the time was not far off when all such dreams and plans had to be definitely abandoned on account of a cruel war.

Dr. Dyrnes had withstood several attacks of acute diseases, especially the dreaded blackwater fever. The time came when he had to admit to himself that he was suffering from the insidious chronic malady of diabetes. He said nothing about it to anyone, although in time they came to realize it. He was his own physician as on occasions he had been his own dentist and his own surgeon. Then came the year 1939 with its tremendous changes both for him personally and for the world at large.

In June of that year Dr. Dyrnes contracted a severe case of influenza, followed by a stubborn cough. This also abated in time, but a painful headache continued. A boil developed in the middle right ear, and there was reason to fear that it would result in a mastoid abcess. Three Government doctors visited him, but there was not much they

could do. A very difficult operation seemed to be the only hope of relief, but such an operation was not without its great dangers, as he was suffering from diabetes, and he was hardly able to go to Tananarive to consult an experienced surgeon. So he decided to remain at home. "Death is not the end of life," he added in telling about his decision.

It was under these circumstances that he wrote a letter to the secretary of Lutheran Board of Missions, dated August 23-24, 1939, part of which was in the nature of a farewell. "In case I am not able to write tomorrow or the next day I wish to say a hearty thanks for the cooperation



The Church at Manasoa

both with you and all the others. It has been a pleasant work, for love has been burning warmly. The Lord has been with us. Love will continue, so that life hereafter will be able to develop in a much higher form. And we shall see God." The next day he continued the letter: "I slept a few hours and feel somewhat stronger. . . . I am on my feet and doing what I can." He also stated that his hearing was much impaired.

But God had yet more work for His servant to do, and

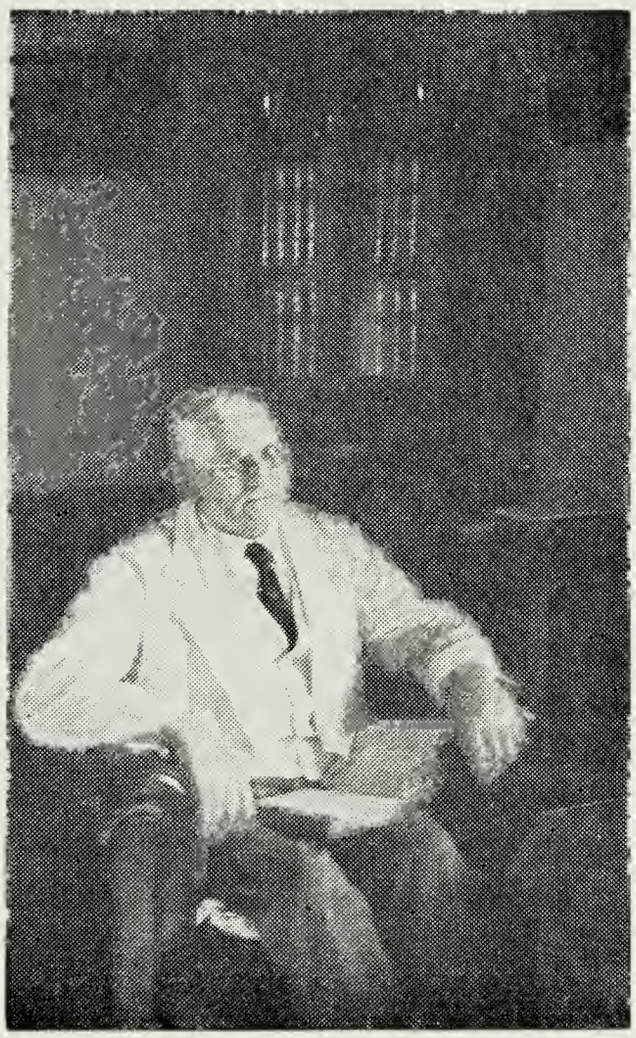
He would show him that He is strong in the weak. Without an operation, without the aid of a specialist he recovered so that a few months later he could write: "I now feel better than I have felt for several years." Even his hearing had returned to some extent, although not entirely, while at the same time his eyesight commenced to fail him.

Then came the war, and with it an almost total severance of mail connection. For over two years one would be fortunate if he received mail that was less than nine months old. Once Dr. Dyrnes received over three hundred items in one mail, counting letters, papers, magazines, and parcel post. But then he had also waited for foreign mail for nearly a year. What little mail did come through conveyed the information that he was toiling on, although his strength was definitely on the down grade. He expressed regret that he was not able to do as much work as before, but he was still carrying on. This was fortunate also for himself as it helped him to bear patiently the deep feeling of loneliness after his wife's death. "To be able to work is a great blessing," he wrote to his brother Anton. So whether it be in the "cathedral" at Manasoa, or in the small bamboo-and-grass churches out in the district, he continued to bring the Gospel message to the congregation, to baptize children and adults, to confirm the youth, and to distribute the Lord's Supper. And he had a good word of cheer for everybody.

One of the first days of December, 1943, a letter was received from Missionary Quanbeck, dated October 13. Here he told that when Dr. Dyrnes heard about the death of Mrs. Hannah Jerstad he remarked that now he was the only one left of those who were on the mission field in 1900. On October 3, eighteen young people were confirmed and he conducted the entire service, including communion, although there were three other ordained pastors

in the audience. He also took part in a district meeting the following week, and in the communion service the next Sunday.

One eye had become practically blind, but there was not much pain on account of that. Not able to confer with an eye specialist he diagnosed his case as diabetic cataract. He



Light at Eventide

was still able to read with some difficulty, and sometimes seemed to see quite well. He had certain alterations made to his veranda so that he would have more shade and fresh air during the hot season, although he seemed fully mindful of the possibility that his days might soon be over.

In reading Missionary Quanbeck's letter the thought naturally came to one that the service on October 3, 1943,

would perhaps be the last one that Dr. Dyrnes would conduct, and so it was, except that he helped with the communion service at the district meeting a week later. This was, however, not to be his last farewell to the congregation at Manasoa. On Sunday, October 24, he asked that the congregation should visit him after the morning service. He announced the songs to be sung and gave a brief talk, witnessing about His faith in God, and admonishing the people to seek the truth which can be found in Christ alone. Then he bade farewell to all.

On December 9, 1943, a cablegram was received from Missionary Molvik, superintendent of the mission, stating: "Dr. Dyrnes died at Manasoa December seventh." Then there came a wait until February 14, 1944, when a letter was received from Missionary Quanbeck, telling about Dr. Dyrnes' last illness, death, and funeral. It was dated December 8, 1943.

Dr. Dyrnes had suffered a great deal of pain during his last two years, especially in his legs. The sore on his left leg had developed diabetic gangrene, and after October 12 he had not been able to be out of bed. He did not expect to live long, and a week later he was in a coma for sixteen hours. The native doctor at Tongobory came and visited him every week until his death. The European doctor at Tulear came and stayed with him for two days. He brought a fresh supply of American insulin that had recently been sent over from Durban, South Africa, so that normal treatments could be renewed. Sister Milla Pederson and the Doctor's native helpers, Koto Noel and Arona, were with him night and day. During his last illness he had visits from several Americans and Europeans; among them were missionaries, colonists, the district chief, and even the Catholic priest from Betioky.

As time went on, Dr. Dyrnes suffered a great deal of pain. He was often depressed. He could be heard asking

God for mercy and for forgiveness for his sins. He often asked those around him to sing for him, but he was not always able to concentrate his thoughts.

On Monday morning, December 6, the foreign mail brought letters from his brother Anton, his brother-in-law, Pastor Johan Mattson, and the secretary of Lutheran Board of Missions. He was told about their contents, but did not seem to respond for he was already partly unconscious and unable to speak. The next night he was very restless. Towards morning he fell asleep for a little while and after that he seemed to recognize those around him. When Mrs. Quanbeck had to leave the room at about 9:30 in the forenoon she waved goodbye to him and he waved back. Death came just before eleven o'clock, suddenly and quietly. It had been forty-three years and three months since he first came to Manasoa.

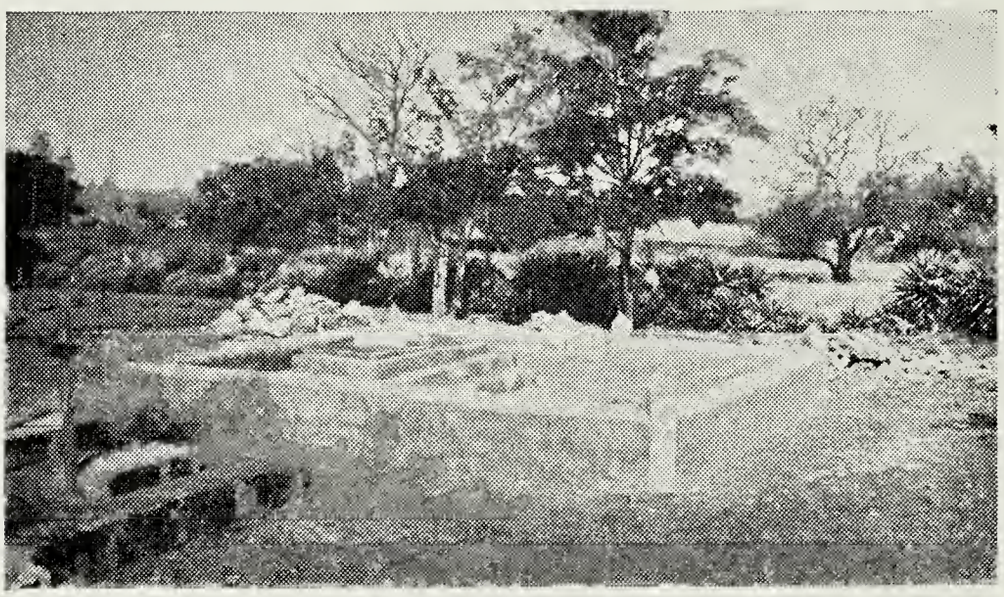
Shortly after his wife's death, Dr. Dyrnes had had a low stone and cement wall put up around their gravelot, and some time later he had placed a simple marble monument over her grave. He had also prepared his own grave. On opening it, two bottles were found, containing messages, one for the natives and the other for the missionaries who might be at Manasoa at the time of his death. Two native carpenters had made a coffin of beautiful hardwood.

The funeral was held on Wednesday, December 8, in the presence of a large number of mourners. Dr. Dyrnes had himself chosen the songs he desired to have sung. The following spoke at the service: Pastor Theodora whose text was Heb. 13:7; Evangelist Samoela, who spoke on Rev. 14:13, and Missionary Quanbeck who had chosen for his text John 11:25.

During the days following the funeral several messages of condolence were received from missionaries, officials, and colonists. From the outlying congregations of the dis-

trict came delegations expressing their love and sympathy. They all felt that they had lost a warm friend.

Dr. John Dyrnes' working day was over, his pilgrimage ended. Two of his greatest wishes had been fulfilled: He rested in the soil of his beloved island of Madagascar, and his firm hope that "we shall see God" had become a glorious reality.



The Resting Place

MEMORIAL SERVICE

At its meeting on December 15, 1943, the Lutheran Board of Missions decided that a memorial service should be held in Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, in the congregation which to Dr. Dyrnes had been a spiritual home from his youth. This service was held Sunday afternoon, January 2, 1944.

The memorial service was opened with the singing of the hymn: "From all Thy saints in warfare, for all Thy saints at rest," after which Pastor M. G. C. Vaagenes, for many years a missionary in Madagascar, led in devotion. A quartet sang the hymn: "As sinks beneath the ocean the sun at eventide." Pastor Melvin J. Olson spoke briefly

on the words in Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying: Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow with them."

The audience sang the first verse of the hymn: "Blessed are the heirs of heaven, the dead who die in Christ forgiven," whereupon Dr. Melvin A. Helland, for nearly twenty years a co-worker with Dr. Dyrnes at Manasoa, delivered the memorial address.

Dr. T. O. Burntvedt, president of the Lutheran Free Church, brought a greeting on behalf of the church body, and the secretary of Lutheran Board of Missions expressed the gratitude of our foreign mission for what Dr. Dyrnes had meant to this work, and gave a few glimpses from his personal contacts with the departed. In closing the audience sang the hymn: "O happy day when we shall stand amid the heavenly throng," whereupon Dr. Claus Morgan, president of Lutheran Board of Mission, pronounced the benediction.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

By Melvin A. Helland

> "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he went." Hebrews 11:8.

This verse from the great chapter on faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is peculiarly fitted as a heading for a memorial address on this occasion when we are gathered to honor the memory of Dr. J. O. Dyrnes. I well remember an early July morning in 1921, when we were approaching the northern tip of Madagascar, how we went up on deck and saw the land in the distance. I thought of it as a "promised land." Any missionary will think of his field as a "promised land." Like Abraham, a missionary, when he is called obeys to go out unto a place which he is to receive for an inheritance. Like Abraham, Dr. Dyrnes went out, not knowing where he went. For though the destination may be known, the country is largely unknown to the new arrival. Like Abraham, a missionary acts on a basis of faith, knowing that God will give him the land as a spiritual inheritance.

When Dr. Dyrnes was a student at Augsburg, he became a member of Trinity congregation. At that time they still had their old church on Tenth Avenue South and Fourth Street. We have been told that when evening services were over, Dr. Dyrnes would wait till all had gone and then help the old janitor blow out the lights. This was as a prophecy of his later career. He was always ready to help those that needed help, and those of us who knew him, know that he was generally the last at the mission station to blow out his light after a long day's work.

He was called to serve, and he was determined to get the best training he could that he might serve better. He was born in Norway May 5, 1867, and came to America at the age of 16 years. He attended an academy in St. Paul where he could be cut off from the Norwegian language and influence, so that he could learn English faster and better. Later he came to Augsburg, graduating from college in 1892 and from the seminary in 1895. He finished his medical course at Hamline University in 1898. The following year he went to France to continue his medical studies, and on September first, 1900, he arrived at Manasoa. On his first fur-

lough, in 1910, he continued his medical studies in Paris, taking a course in tropical medicine, and on his second furlough, 1919-1920, he took a short course at Tulane University. Even after he passed the age of sixty he was taking a correspondence course in psychology from Columbia University.

He went to Madagascar at a time when great faith was needed for such a venture. Several missionaries had died; in 1900 three died in one year. His first task would be to try to check this appalling death rate, but he did not only combat disease in others; he himself had seven attacks of the terrible blackwater fever, and had to literally conquer death in himself.

His first journey in Madagascar was prophetic of the hard life he was to live. Rev. and Mrs. Tou travelled with him, and when they were to go from Tulear to Manasoa (about 100 miles) Rev. Tou, wishing to save money, provided only two travelling chairs and two teams of carriers. The one was for Mrs. Tou and the two men would use the other alternately. But Rev. Tou soon got sick and Dr. Dyrnes walked most of the way. When they arrived at Manasoa he found a station where the missionaries' houses were built of thatch and hardly fit for white people in so trying a climate. And ominously near were the new graves of those whose death was caused at least in part by the unfavorable quarters. One of his first measures was to demand better housing, and four years later the station was moved to its present location on higher ground, farther from the ricefields. His whole missionary career was passed at Manasoa station.

How shall one be able to portray a man like Dr. Dyrnes? A photograph may be a true copy of all the features of a person and yet be unlike him because it fails to show the characteristic moods of the subject. Snapshots taken unawares, may lack artistry, but may be more true to life because they have caught a characteristic expression. Let me try to show you a series of such snapshots.

Just as tragedy called him to hurry to his field of labor in the beginning, so also something tragic seemed to follow him through life. But he could always offset the sad and trying things of life with his good gift of humor. January days are hot at Manasoa, and I remember how I used to call at his office on the way to school at two o'clock. I would remark about the heat, perhaps even close to 110 degrees in the shade, and he would answer: "Yes, but just think how cold it is in Minnesota now, and how much they have to pay for coal. We get our heat for nothing."

An early tragedy in his life is witnessed by a paper weight that he kept on his desk. It looked like an irregular lump of metal a little larger than a golf ball. It was heavy and when you examined it more closely you could see an imprint of money. He had kept some American pennies when he went out, and once while out on a journey his house had burned down. With it went his books and his instruments, and almost everything he had. Even a case of canned fishballs that had just arrived were lost. His col-

lection of pennies had been fused together in the heat of the fire and that was all he had left as a souvenir of his first house. The fire, however, was an added reason for planning better houses in a better place.

His interests were varied. Nothing human was outside of his interests, and he was always trying to better conditions for others. Better houses for the missionary staff; better ways of living for the natives; the introduction of new sources of food, and better ways of tilling the soil; he was concerned about all these. And the fact that he was interested in the welfare of others, added to his medical aid, won him many friends and several very faithful native helpers.

One morning, in the early days, he found a man on his doorsteps that was almost dead. He had been beaten and robbed, and someone had carried him and left him there. The doctor nursed him back to life and he began working in the garden. He became a Christian and took the name Rabenjamina. One day the doctor sent him to get some banana plants out in the woods by a stream. The natives were afraid to plant trees in those days, and heathen ideas are hard to uproot. Rabenjamina went to dig up the plants, but when he came back he told that his feet had stuck in the mud so he could not get away. Then he remembered to pray the Lord's Prayer and having done this he was able to free himself. This man worked as gardener for twenty-two years and many of the large trees at the station were planted by him. He married and had several children. Doctor's "services" to the oldest boy constitute a unique record. He assisted at the boy's birth; he baptized him, confirmed him, married him and ordained him to the ministry.

Another faithful servant during the first half of the doctor's career was Rajakoba, his cook. During the early years it happened once that Doctor Dyrnes was called to Tongobory to visit a sick French officer. It was a distance of 40 miles and Doctor travelled on horseback. When he had been there about an hour, Rajakoba came running to tell that he must hurry back to the station for one of the missionaries was seriously ill. The doctor got on his horse again and rode back to Manasoa, and his cook trotted after,—about 80 miles in all without a rest.

Dr. Dyrnes had many interests and hobbies. One of these was planting. The gardens at Manasoa are a source of wonder to those who know how hard it is to keep a garden in such a place. In the early days there was a grafted orange tree that had sweet oranges on one side, and then six months later sour oranges on the other. Many have been surprised to see a row of about a dozen high cocoanut trees 100 miles inland, for they usually are found only near the sea. Years ago a native brought three guava trees that he wanted to sell and the doctor gave him the equivalent of an American dollar for each tree. The natives thought he was throwing his money away, but today guava trees are found near most of the villages and the natives like the fruit. At another time the

doctor got six allouez plants (a kind of a sisal or century plant). These made good hedges around cattle pens, and the fiber could be used for making rope. Years later a parasite destroyed the cactus in south Madagascar, but by that time the allouez had become common and was used for replacing the dead cactus hedges. He experimented with different kinds of fruits and plants and also with European cattle.

In the early days an American wagon was sent out. But since a four wheeled wagon was not practical, the two sets of wheels were used separately as ox-carts. When they broke the first team of oxen the local natives had not seen oxen pull carts before, and they remarked: "Why make an ox do something that a man can do?" But now there are many ox-carts in the country.

Our doctor had various hobbies as a collector. At various times he had pet parrots, or doves, or a new breed of guinea hens, or a Malagasy monkey (lemur). There was also a collection of different kinds of rocks, and of fossilized bones, such as hippopotamus bones, or bones of the epyornis, the largest bird ever known. He also had a collection of petrified shells taken near the station which prove that at some time the seashore had been near Manasoa, a couple of hundred feet higher than the present shore.

The variety of work done can be shown in the activities of an average day. At 7:30 school opened, and he used to teach the first hour. At 8:30 he went to his dispensary. After noon he would do laboratory work. At about 4:30 he would often get on his horse and ride down to the garden or rice fields. At 7:30 there often was a meeting in church. At 11:00 P. M. he might still be writing letters and someone would ask him to judge a family quarrel or a case of stealing. When he spoke of theft in his own garden, he used to say that he always thought it best to plant so much that there would be some left after the thieves had taken what they wanted.

A few unusual cases will show the range of medical practice. There was the case of the woman whose little child was taken by a crocodile while the mother was out in the stream filling her gourd with water. She had wrapped her lamba (a large cloth) around her arm and gagged the crocodile so it let go of the child. But both mother and child came to the station to have their wounds cared for. Then there was the young man who took a nap while herding cattle. When he awoke the cattle were gone, and thinking they were stolen he cut his throat. He was brought to the mission station and his life was saved. He was there for many weeks, and while there learned to read, and heard the Gospel. Then there were the two women who got into a fight on account of a man. They grabbed each other by the hair and held tight,—and bit each other's lips so that they had to be stitched. We remember also Ramanase, whose knee joints were dry. He had been crippled for years and not tried to walk. He came and started to learn and in time also started getting around with the help of a

long stick. He went through the Bible School and became an evangelist among the sick at the hospital. Then there was also the young leper that would come late in the evening to ask for help.

At one time the doctor was treating a man who had erysipelas. Somehow he got an infection in his own nose. There was a birthday on the station but the doctor said he had better not come as he should not expose the others to infection. But while the others were drinking coffee he administered a local anesthetic and operated on his own nose.

What kind of a monument can one raise to a man like that? The Apostle Paul wrote to one of his congregations: "Ye are our epistle," meaning "our letter of recommendation." The congregations, the station at Manasoa, the Home for Boys,—these are monuments to their founder.

Many monuments have been built in this world, but the finest monuments are not those that are built "according to decisions." Some of the noblest monuments, like some of the finest tributes, have been made unwittingly. Let me descibe such a monument.

There is an old wooden building at Manasoa, which for many years was used as a dispensary. It is built on posts to keep it up from the ground. On the south side, the shady side, there is a stone step of three or four risers. The stones have been worn more than half through by the bare feet of those who came for help. This is a fitting monument. Men needed him and he ministered to their need.

He went out "not knowing whither he went," but God led thousands to him that needed his medical ministrations, and his spiritual ministry. Could anyone want a better monument than the testimony of those stone steps? Men, women and children wore out the stones of his steps because they needed what God had given to him that he might give it to them, and thus show them the way to God the giver.

For him it was more blessed to give than to receive.

Dr. J. O. Dyrnes Memorial Fund

At the memorial service held in Trinity Church, Minneapolis, on January 2, 1944, some money was given in memory of Dr. J. O. Dyrnes. Some more gifts have been received since. No certain conditions have been attached to these gifts, but at its meeting on February 15, Lutheran Board of Missions took under consideration the advisability of creating a fund in memory of "the beloved physician." As a result it was decided to create such a fund, on the following basis:

1. It is to be a fund for continuing medical work in our mission, if a way can be found for the realization of such a plan.
2. If this proves impossible, the money is to be used for educational work, such as supporting theological students at the Seminary at Ivory, or pupils in the Bible school who give promise of becoming evangelists or teachers, and on the whole to put our educational work on a stronger footing.
3. It is not intended to create a permanent fund, but a liquid one. This means that both the interest and portions of the principal may be used, until all of it has been used up in from fifteen to twenty-five years.

Such are the present plans. More information will be given as soon as we have had an opportunity to contact our superintendent on the field. This is only to serve as a notice that such a fund is in the making, and that we shall be happy to receive contributions from those who feel that their lives have been enriched and their spiritual outlook has been widened through the noble example of one who went out for the sake of the Name of Christ.

It should appeal in a special way to our young people to have a share in this undertaking.

Send contributions to

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